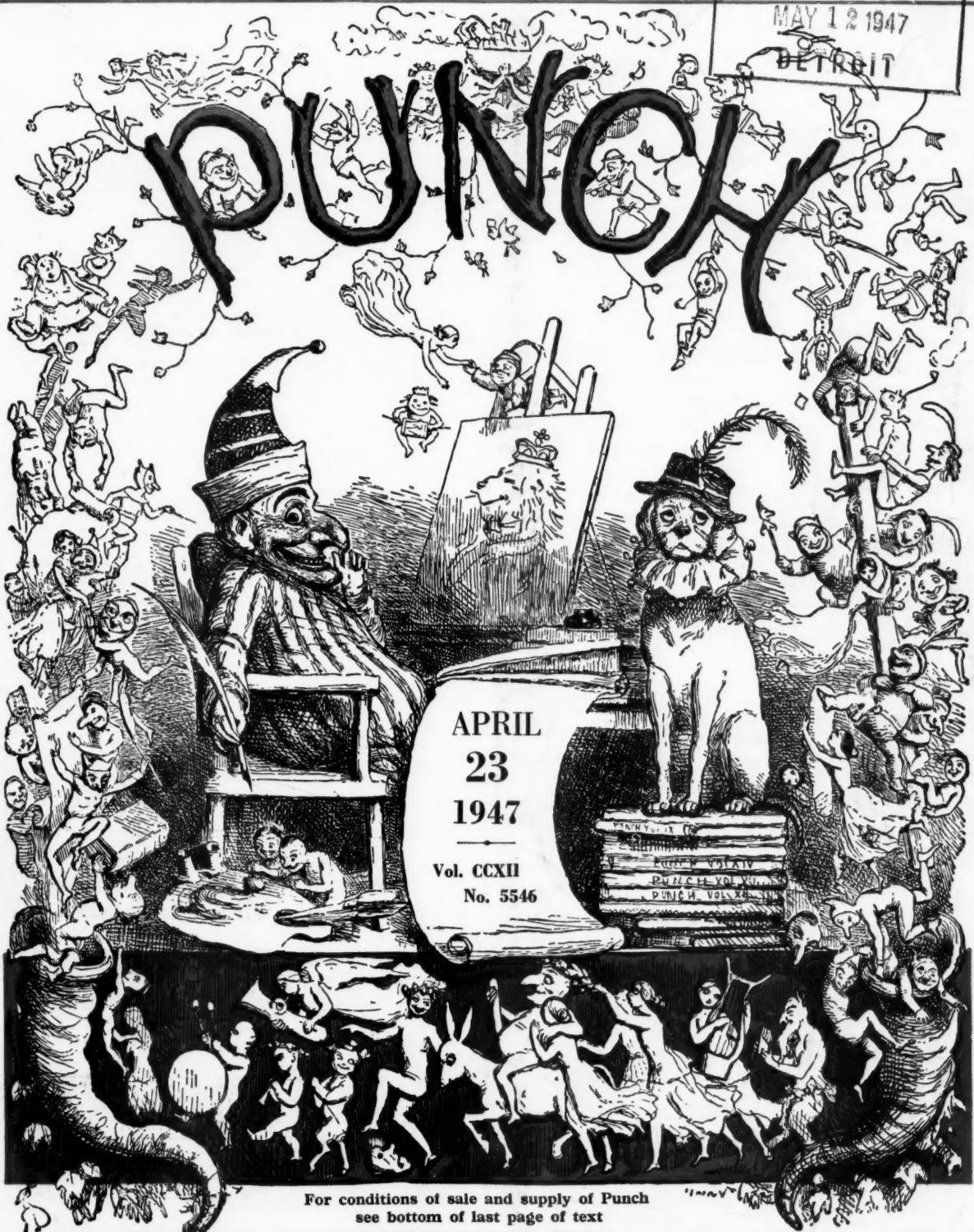


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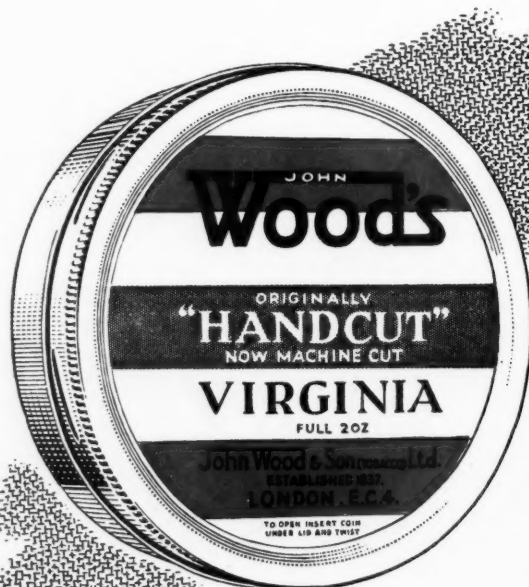


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for  
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NORSEMAN  
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any particularly effective remedy was  
engraved on the posts of the Temple  
of Esculapius, the god of healing.  
He prescribed natural remedies for  
disease and employed soothing  
charms to relieve pain.


Today pain can be relieved swiftly  
and surely with 'Cogene', in which  
four separate drugs (three of them  
pain relievers and the fourth a  
stimulant) are scientifically combined  
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present in such a small amount there  
can be no harmful after-effects, yet  
the combination is so effective that  
'Cogene' will relieve the most  
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Supplies are still limited, but your  
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## COGENE

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A 'GENATOSAN' Product

## Bird Hints



### NO PASTRY for POLLY

YOUR PARROT should on no account  
be given such foods as cake, pastries,  
meat or bones, which will only upset  
the digestive system. To keep your  
parrot in perfect health, make sure  
that he has the right kind of foods.  
Give him fresh, dry green food, such  
as watercress, lettuce leaf or tender  
cabbage leaf and, very occasionally  
raw carrot or a piece of sweet apple  
or orange.

Every day give fresh water for  
drinking and CAPERNS PARROT FOOD.

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BIRD SEEDS AND FOODS

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it's  
g-o-i-n-g!  
he's using

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for eczema. The proved remedy for  
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Non-greasy, stops irritation, promotes  
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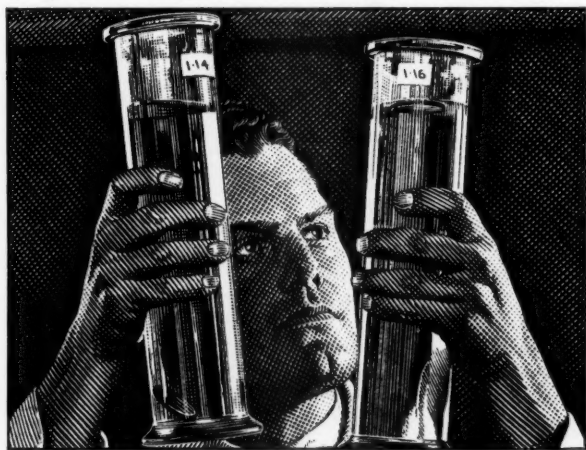
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WHY SOME TYRES ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS—No. 2



## Sink and Swim

If the mixture of the rubber compound used is not consistent, tyres do not wear well. That is why Henley's take random sample discs from each mix and test them in two solutions of glycerine and water of slightly different densities. If the densities

of the discs are correct they will all float in one solution and sink in the other, thus proving that the mix is consistent. Another example of the meticulous care in manufacture which is the secret of Henley's rapidly rising reputation for reliability.



Another reason why Old Henty says

### "HENLEY!"

—now that's a good tyre"

HENLEY'S TYRE AND RUBBER COMPANY, LIMITED,  
MILTON COURT, WESTCOTT, DORKING, SURREY. Works: Gravesend, Kent



*Formula for a fine tobacco*

TAKE the choicest leaf; let it be blended by methods truly tested over 177 years of experience; exclude all artificial flavouring... and there you have a fragrant tobacco for pipe or cigarette such as makes other men say 'Ah, John Cotton — lucky fellow!'

★ John Cotton Tobacco . . Nos. 1 & 2, No. 4 and Empire

★ John Cotton No. 1 Cigarettes

## JOHN COTTON

*A Trusted Tobacco—a Perfect Cigarette*

MADE IN EDINBURGH SINCE 1770



You don't hear  
old hands  
asking for 'PLUGS'—

THE WORD IS

## K.L.G



**K.L.G. CORUNDITE SPARKING PLUGS**

K.L.G. Sparking Plugs Limited, Cricklewood Works, London, NW2



## In the right place

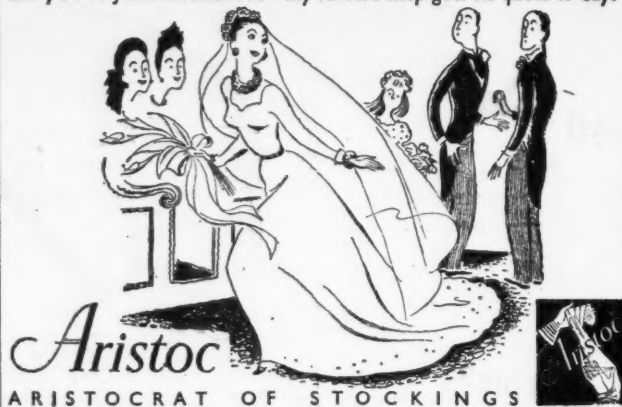
How glad you'll be—when the need arises—that you have made sure that your Medicine Cabinet never fails to contain a bottle of 'Milk of Magnesia.'\*

Everyone in the family will know where to turn for quick relief from digestive upsets. More important, 'Milk of Magnesia' is immediately available, in the home, should the doctor order it.

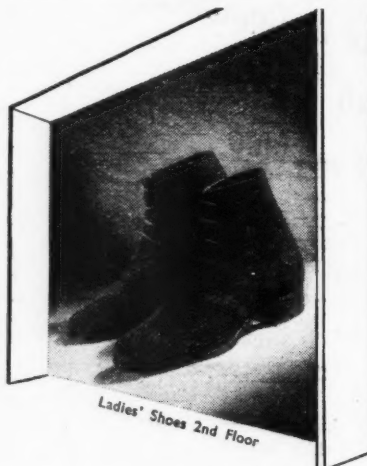
### 'Milk of Magnesia'

A PROVEN PRODUCT OF THE  
CHAR. H. PHILLIPS CHEMICAL CO., LTD.

'Sorry! I've just remembered—my Aristoc shop gets its quota to-day.'



*Abigail Masham 1710*



Fortnum & Mason's had just opened in the days when Abigail Masham was Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Anne in 1710. If she could see us now, we've no doubt that she would be delighted with the modern shoe fashions she'd find on our Second Floor. And the Fortnum quality—established in her time—is still as well-known for its excellence today.

### FORTNUM and MASON Ltd.

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### The good tempered 'KIRBIGRIP'

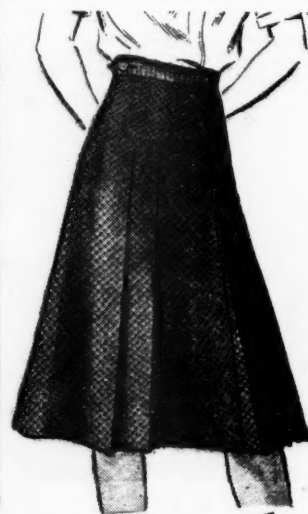
**NEVER LETS YOU, or your hair, DOWN**

It doesn't matter how many times you use a Kirbigrip it still retains its spring. Moulded to the shape of the head, Kirbigrips, with over a 100 years experience in changing hairstyles, are

**MADE PERFECTLY**

*for you*

Obtainable from all good Stores, made in England by Kirby Beard & Co. Ltd. Birmingham & London



### GOR-RAY

*skirts one better!*

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IN PRINCIPAL CENTRES



"There's no sweeter tobacco comes from Virginia and no better brand than the 'Three Castles'"  
W. M. Thackeray—"The Virginians"

## THE "THREE CASTLES"

CIGARETTES  
MANUFACTURED BY W. D. & H. O. WILLS

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W. D. & H. O. Wills, Branch of The Imperial Tobacco Co. (of Great Britain & Ireland), Ltd.

## Locker-room Sensation



"HENRY," said Mr. Chipshott, "something magical has just manifested itself."

"You mean that mirage, Sir?" said the locker-room man, sympathetically.

"I mean that magnificent 'Viyella' sports shirt!" exclaimed Mr. Chipshott, excitedly.

"It's identical with the one I've been dreaming of—that delightful pattern, that trim cut, that perfectly-tailored collar! How did it get in here?"

"Wishful thinking, Sir," said the locker-room man. "Lots of the members have been seeing these mirages lately. 'Viyella' Visions, I call 'em."

"Then it is only a vision?"

"Yes, Sir—until the real thing appears."

"When I can play in a 'Viyella' shirt again," said Mr. Chipshott, "I shall be a far, far better golfer than I have ever been."

"That's what *all* the members say," said the locker-room man.

# Viyella

PIJAMAS • SPORTS SHIRTS • SOCKS

Keep a warm welcome for 'Viyella' when it comes back to brighten your wardrobe.



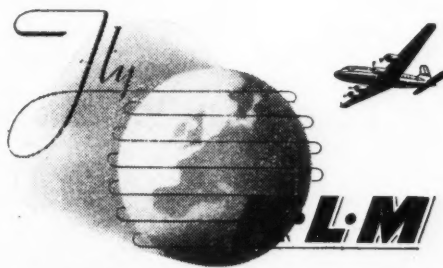
## IMPERIAL LEATHER

HAND-FINISHED

## Toilet Soaps

A Cussons product

Cussons Sons & Co. Ltd, 84 Brook St, Grosvenor Square, London W.1



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Approved by time  Backed by tradition

RELIABILITY • PUNCTUALITY • COMFORT • SPEED



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- The best days for long-distance travel are **TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY** and **THURSDAY**, when there is usually more room in the trains.
- Travelling in mid-week helps to relieve traffic congestion at the week-end.
- Like the staggering of working hours of large firms and departments, mid-week travel spreads the traffic over longer periods, thus contributing to the greater comfort of all passengers in these days of unavoidable shortage of transport.

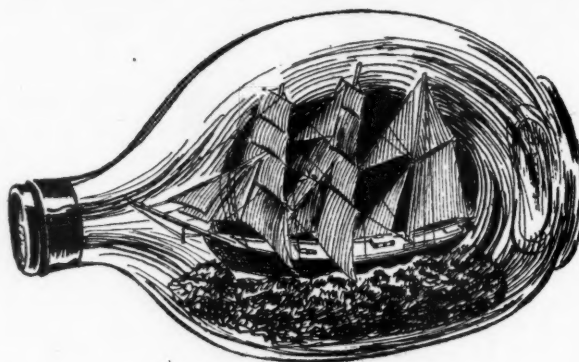
So—if you can—please  
**TRAVEL MID-WEEK**

GWR · LMS



LNER · SR

## I saw this at Harrods



... within a dimpled whisky bottle a three-masted barque under full sail. A pleasing reminder of the crafts of the old-world sailor—from the Fancy Goods Department on the ground floor.

# HARRODS

HARRODS LTD

SLOane 1234

LONDON SW1

Not too little..



not too much..



but just right IF IT'S  
**ERASMIC** SHAVING STICK  
THANKS TO ITS  
DOUBLE-DENSE LATHER



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THE ERASMIC CO. LTD.



## OLDHAM BATTERIES

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# PUNCH

OR

THE LONDON CHARIVARI



Vol. CCXII No. 5546

April 23 1947

## Charivaria

THE Moscow conference is closing to a draw.

As a result of the prolonged winter, market-gardeners are expecting their usual late frosts in mid-August instead of in early May: these must not, however, be confused with the early frosts of *next* winter.



"— MACARONI AND CHEESE  
IN  
TOMATO SAUCE.  
Containing  
TOMATO SAUCE, MACARONI AND  
CHEESE."  
*Label on tin.*

Haven't much imagination,  
have they?

A writer stresses the tact  
that a woman must use in  
answering a child's questions.  
It is then that invention is  
the necessity of mother.

English visitors to Ireland this summer are being asked to take their tea ration with them. In return they will be shown how to use cups with handles.

### Instantaneous Sports Corner

"The television broadcast will be from 2.55—five minutes before the kick-off—until half-time, at three o'clock."—*Evening paper.*

A man who called at a London office selling typewriter ribbons stole the clock. The head of the firm is partly consoled by the fact that no members of the staff were watching it.

"There is no place in the house where I can enjoy a book in peace," complains a father. Never mind. In these days of fuel shortage he can always go into the cupboard under the stairs and read the meter.

We read of a boxer named Gate who was knocked out in the first minute during a recent amateur tournament. It appears that he left himself wide open.

Recent warm spring weather has given rise to the hope that the late winter floods may merely have been staggered summer.

We hear that to encourage the Government to carry on the trade unions have offered it several incentives.

A naturalist warns us not to be surprised if we come across quite a lot of green snakes in country lanes and spinneys this month. It must be realized that they have had little chance yet to get ripe this year.



We read that a "wheat queen" has been elected by a certain South American State. It is not yet known who is to be queen of the maize.

Hundreds of Burnley football fans have expressed their intention to walk to Wembley to see the Cup Final. Many others, no doubt, will go on foot by train.

Hull now has a machine which fillets forty-five fish per minute. It will enable retailers to disappoint customers much more quickly.

### No Escape

"Missing, Part-Persian Cat, brown and orange. Finder rewarded, dead or alive."—*Advt. in Yorks. paper.*

"I enjoy playing Wagner above all other composers," says an orchestral drummer. Especially these chilly evenings. So warming.



## A Budget of My Own

**W**HEN I am Chancellor of the Exchequer, as I often am during my spare moments at this time of year, I usually decide to abolish direct taxation altogether. It is a popular move.

My fellow citizens, I point out, like to spend their income, such as it is, themselves, and I can rely on their greed, snobbery, self-indulgence, vanity, sentimentalism, pride and all the other virtues which make them what they are, to bring me in a sufficient revenue.

I therefore enormously increase the taxes on things that are not taxed already or not taxed enough. My Budget is a good Budget. Despite a few murmurs of disapproval it wins the admiration of the House. Before tearing it to pieces bit by bit the Leader of the Opposition congratulates me on making the best and most beautiful Budget speech he has ever had to endure.

### I tax ties.

This is the day, I point out, of the working man, and the working man does not need a tie. It is a mere ornamental luxury. It does not warm nor protect the throat and chest. Even if it did a beard would serve the same end. The stud or button will sufficiently bind the neck of the shirt in winter, or release it when the weather is warm. Millions of man-hours are spent in adjusting the tie, especially in conjunction with white collars. I do not specifically tax white collars because without the tie they will disappear.

They do disappear in any case, I explain, because they are not returned from the laundry, or so seldom that laundries possess them for three-quarters of the year and the owner for no more than three months.

I tax ties *ad colorem* with special reference to the numbers of spots and stripes; the maximum impost falls on those which are secured by means of a pearl-headed pin.

Yet I know that despite the hundred per cent. duty most of my fellow citizens will continue to wear ties. There is loud applause.

### I tax permanent waves.

A ripple of dissent spreads round the benches as I tax permanent waves and laps against the walls of the House. But I am adamant. This is the day of the working woman. More millions of woman-hours are wasted in the making of permanent waves than all the millions of man-hours spent in the tying of ties.

At this point I make some rather clever allusion to the goddess Aphrodite rising from the foam, which has been worked out by one of my secretaries; there is a lot of muttering in the House at this point, and you will have to read *Hansard* to see how good the allusion really was.

### I tax cats.

As I tax cats I look round the House with a purr and a smile. There is a certain amount of indignation. But I go on to say that I do not tax working cats. If a cat can be proved to have caught so many mice within so many weeks I except it from all dues. I tax supernumerary cats which eat the people's food, destroy their slumbers, and have poems written about them when they are dead. These cats can well afford to pay for their keep.

### I tax bottled sauces.

It is not likely that this tax will lessen the sale of bottled sauces, which disguise bad cooking and deter foreign tourists from visiting our shores, but if it does I shall not care.

### I tax historical novels.

I tax, that is to say, all novels containing such passages as these:

"Roll out the barrel," cried the Merry Monarch as he dug his Lord of Rochester in the ribs."

"What, wondered Messalina, were the essential constituents of her ego? She looked out over the turgid waters of the Tiber and smiled an enigmatic smile."

Or—

"O.K., Nebuchadnezzar," replied the swart functionary as he piled the cedar faggots still higher on the blazing furnace."

I certainly do tax these.

I tax hoardings.

This statement provokes laughter (frantic laughter) in the crowded House. I pause until it has partially died away. I go on to explain that I do not refer to savings but to those high boards carrying advertisements which disfigure the scenery of the country and the architecture of towns. It is a mistake to suppose that beautiful vistas or dignified buildings are improved by recommendations to relax the nerves or eliminate digestive ailments. Those who continue to hold this belief must pay for it. For some reason or other this tax of mine is well received by the newspaper press.

I tax ivy.

There is far too much of it. It destroys walls and houses as well as trees. But those who like it or are too lazy to remove it can subsidize the public purse.

I levy a large duty on the snapshots of celebrities and nonentities in the daily press. This tax is not so popular with the newspapers. But it is long overdue. I point out that justice is seldom or never done to the victims of these photographs, and I feel it to be my duty as Chancellor of the Exchequer to see that, if injustice is done, those who are guilty should suffer for it. Perhaps this is not really my duty. But I like doing it.

I tax speeches.

I tax all speeches made on public occasions, which I specify, outside Parliament. They involve too much waste of man-time. I propose to send officials to all other gatherings where speeches are made with stop-watches in their hands. Speeches are to be taxed *ad nauseam, ad diuturnitatem et ad maximam fabularum senectutem*. (Roars of delight.)

If I decide to tax cigarettes at all I raise the price to sixpence or a shilling each, so that one may conveniently use them for paying a bus fare or tipping a taxicab-driver, and I remember one of the first remarks on our national finance which I overheard a week ago:

"I've just 'ad me first Budget cigarette and burnt off arf me moustache."

In any case, while I make my speech I take a meditative sip from time to time out of a tumbler full of brandy. I raise my head like a bird after each sip. It is very good brandy: and it is duty free. EVOE.

### Something Each Way

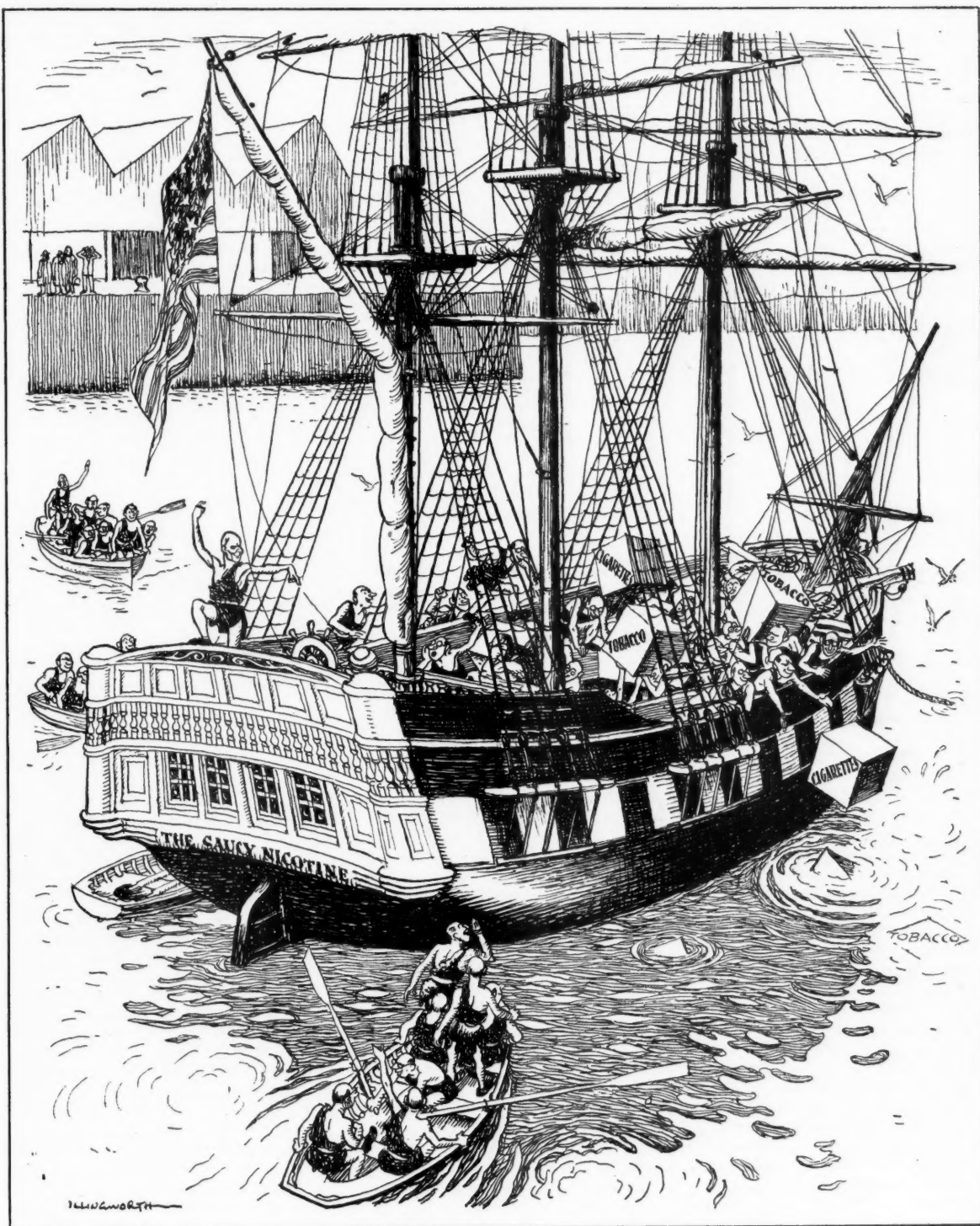
"He also met Rev. Father Cormac, Chaplain, Catholic Stage Guild, and went to see 'The Devil's Disciple' at the Gaiety." "Irish Independent."

"The piano accompanist was Miss Margaret M——, whose delightful talent for striking the right note is so much appreciated."

*Scottish paper.*

In a pianist it makes so much difference.





THE BRISTOL TOBACCO PARTY



*"We do not intend that winning the football pool shall make any difference to our normal mode of living."*

## A Master at the Broom-Head

**T**HERE must be something fundamentally wrong with the design of the common broom or brush. I have suspected it for years: now, I am sure. The principle of the thing is basically unsound—probably some fault at the fulcrum or a matter of eccentric stress—and it is high time that such bodies as the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Standards Institute and the Council of Industrial Design put their heads together over it. We have been using this same design for upwards of five thousand years, but second thoughts are often best.

Meanwhile, a few words of advice. The structure of the household brush is simple enough. There are two components—a pole, perfectly cylindrical except that it is rounded slightly at one end, and a brush-head consisting of a hump-backed piece of wood and a number of bristles. The wood-work is usually marked with matching

bands of poker-work, coloured red, but this is merely an artistic refinement without any mechanical significance.

Unquestionably the chief feature of the brush-head is the well or socket. This is best regarded as a practical suggestion from the manufacturer as to how the brush and the stick may be connected. Anyone who has repaired a few brooms knows that the socket is always cut on the slant, as it were, at what is judged to be the most satisfactory angle of sweep. He knows, too, that this obliquity makes any contact between the broom-stick and a nail or screw driven laterally across the socket a pure and glorious fluke.

I said "nail or screw," and I have no doubt that the experts have now discarded this article in disgust. But I must stick to my guns. The world of men can be divided very precisely into two classes—the screwers and the nailers. The screwers are careful,

stolid men. They make good husbands and fathers, sound, middle-of-the-road politicians and first-rate foremen. The nailers are ruthless, hot-headed types. Politically they are revolutionists and anarchists, but they make superb uncles, dashing lovers and arrogant shop-stewards. Now the odd thing about a nailer is that even when he is convinced that a screw is needed he will prefer two nails. Every confirmed nailer believes that two nails are better than one screw, five nails better than two screws, eight nails better than three screws, and so on. There is a sort of table of equivalents that he knows instinctively. The manufacturers seem ignorant of this distinction between nailers and screwers, for they continue to provide their broom-heads with but one bore-hole,\* to the great advantage of the screwers.

\* This should not be confused with the socket.

Let us now suppose that you are called upon to repair a broom. Your first task is to remove the nails which are lodged uselessly across the socket. Do not try to extract them bodily unless you are prepared to remove the timber in which they are embedded and unless you have had a good look at your tools beforehand. It is much safer to drive the nails deeper into the wood until they are out of sight. In this way the wood becomes reinforced after the manner of concrete.

It so happens that the socket has a diameter slightly larger than the head of the ordinary domestic hammer and this fact tempts many repairers to rain blow after blow upon it in the hope of hitting the nails which lie half-concealed in its depths. The temptation should be resisted, for a hammer, like lightning, never strikes twice in

the same place and can do irreparable damage. My own practice, now, is to unscrew a castor from one of the drawing-room chairs, insert it upside down (it just fits) in the mouth of the socket, and rain blow after blow upon it. The castor forces the nails into the timber and clears the well of all obstructions. Should the castor break the chair will be thrown off its balance and you may as well remove the other castors or books.

The stick is now placed in the socket. Take a six-inch nail, hold it at a ridiculous angle against the woodwork, and ask for the hammer. Repeat this five or six times, varying the angle and the direction of the hammer blows as much as possible. The broom is then considered mended. To test this pull the stick gently—if it comes away from the socket push it back and drive in another nail just to make sure.

A final word of warning. With the bristles of the brush in contact with the floor you are hammering against a very springy surface. Thus each blow had its repercussion: the nail bobs back viciously, is loosened by the jolt and rolls under the gas-stove. This difficulty may be overcome either by placing both feet firmly on the broom-head (remember to duck as the pole swings into position) or by extracting a number of bristles and thus reducing the elasticity factor. If the bristles are rendered limp and useless by your weight they may be restored to vitality by immersion in a bucket of cold water containing two aspirin tablets.

To keep the broom in condition remove the frayed end of the stick with a saw every week until it is short enough to fit into the fire. Hod.

## Who Done It?

"**I** BEEN waitin' very nigh an hour for that book," grumbled the bookman, dodging up at my elbow yet again.

At my favourite bookshop anyone may enter and browse at will, and I had ignored his fretting and the constant intrusion of his moustache, which was in any case played out and resembled some seaweed taken more or less at random. When, however, he stooped and plunged the thing right into the novel I was reading, I thought it time to take a strong line.

"Are you a new salesman here?" I snapped.

"No—I'm a customer," he said. "I been reading that novel a week now, on and off. I'm half-way through it."

"If you are so interested in it, why don't you buy it?"

"Why don't *you*?" he asked spitefully, clutching my novel.

"I am merely browsing," I replied, smiling coldly and twisting back his thumb.

"You've browsed twelve bloomin' chapters!" he cried indignantly. "I was here first—why can't I 'ave a read?"

"Find another copy," I said curtly.

"There ain't one," he replied, peering stubbornly into my novel again.

It was an embarrassing situation. I could hardly complain to the manager—after all, I was only browsing, not buying the thing. Yet I was loath to abandon such an enthralling novel. I decided to ignore him. I found that by forcing him against a

bookcase and leaning to one side I could see the book quite well.

"Shall I tell you who done it?" he whispered presently.

"Certainly not!"

"It ain't who *you* think it is."

"I don't wish to know—it spoils the story," I shouted.

"I took a quick peep at the end. I like to 'ave a idea who done it, so I can keep me eye on 'im while I'm reading."

He thrust his face deeper into my novel, but after a brief scuffle we adjusted our positions to our mutual satisfaction.

"That bit you're reading now is only a red 'erring," he said presently. "You wait till you come to the blunt instrument."

"This is intolerable!" I stormed. "There are plenty of books here—go and read something else!"

I wrenched the novel from his hands and waved it furiously at the shelves. Something fluttered from its pages.

"There!" he cried in a temper, "now you've been and lost me place! That tram-ticket was me bookmark!"

He picked it up and whistled softly for a while against its edge. I began to get on very well—I am an extremely rapid reader. Suddenly he leaped on me, wild with excitement.

"That's me place!" he cried. "Now we can browse together."

I grimly read a page and tried to turn it over, but he hung on fiercely, his lips moving ecstatically to each word.

"This settles it!" I hissed, closing the book and tucking it under my arm. "I shall *buy* the wretched thing. Good day to you!"

He blinked at me incredulously, then emitted a sort of trumpeting snort, something like a housewife's sigh, and crept forlornly from the shop. I mingled with the other customers for a while, nodding pleasantly at the manager, who humbly followed me round with a wistful glow in his eyes.

Now I have long maintained that there is far too much of this sly reading and borrowing going on among book-lovers. Books should be bought and cherished. Yet it seemed somehow a pity to buy this particular novel, after reading so much of it. I decided to slip out for a coffee and return to reconsider the matter.

Outside I had a strange feeling of being watched, like a piece of coal on a doorstep. Suddenly I spotted the bookman emerging stealthily from a doorway. I streaked back to the bookshop, but with a wild cry he shot inside before me. I peeped in gloomily. He had already inserted his bookmark and was settling down comfortably to the fourteenth chapter.

I shall certainly buy that novel—it is after all the proper thing to do. Besides, it will be weeks before the bookman has finished with it. I happened to pass my bookshop unusually early this morning. To my disgust there he was, standing outside with an umbrella and some sandwiches, waiting for them to open.



## Nothing But Cheese Omelettes

THE buzzer beside the speaking-tube sounded, and behind the long counter the waiter ambled up, applied his ear, and listened in silence for a few moments. Then he turned his head and spoke, looking at the mouth of the tube with contempt down his nose, as if it had failed to tip him.

"No," he said. "Two mash, one cauliflower, treacle tart and send down a jug of hot water."

As he turned away the service lift came down from the kitchen, which was on the top floor. He threw up the door and stared behind it, scowling. Then he went back to the speaking-tube and savagely ground his thumb into the button of the buzzer, leaning sideways to listen.

A faint inquiring squawk came from the tube. He turned immediately and shot at it "Where's my roast and blanc-mange?"

The tube embarked on a long explanation, which he heard to the end. Then he said, "Well why didn't you call it off?"

The tube replied briefly.

"Not to me you didn't," said the waiter. "And another thing. What's these two cheese omelettes? I never ordered no cheese omelettes. Miss!" he called to the waitress who served at the other end of the counter. "You order two cheese omelettes? No," he resumed to the tube, "nor the young lady didn't either."

He listened again for a little, came away without saying anything further, sent back the lift, and set to work cutting some slices of bread.

"They got no idea up there," he said to me. "It's staff shortage. You know what some of 'em get? *Seven pounds a—*"

He stopped, listening to the waitress, who was now herself at the speaking-tube. "Roast is off!" he called to her warningly, holding the bread-knife as if about to swat a fly.

"O.K., mash," said the waitress with resignation.

"That makes three mash in!" the waiter cried. He pointed at her with his knife, opening his eyes wide.

The waitress listened for a moment and then walked away, saying over her shoulder "Mash is off after my order."

"Can they do my two?"

She made no reply. He hastily put down the knife, trotted back to the tube, and cried into it anxiously "That's three mash in!"

He listened with a deepening frown, formulating some retort which was forestalled by the arrival of the lift.

When he saw what was in it he flew into a passion and attacked the buzzer again, but this time he had to wait for a reply. He stood there breathing hard, uneasily keeping his eyes away from customers at the counter who were trying to attract his attention. At last he turned and said bitterly to the speaking-tube "There's three more cheese omelettes here!" and turned instantly to listen to whatever fantastic excuse might be put forward.

Whatever it was, it startled him. Still with his ear to the tube, he said wonderingly to the waitress "Says they got a check up there! You send up a check for three cheese omelettes?"

She was attending to somebody several yards away and did not hear. With an air of incredulity he emptied the lift and sent it back, placing the three cheese omelettes in a row on the counter and distributing the other things to impatient customers. Then he went back to the speaking-tube and cried in a venomous tone "There's two more mash in! And I want one soup, *red-hot*, mind!"

Then he returned to his work with the bread.

Meanwhile the waitress was inspecting the cheese omelettes. "These yours?" she said sceptically.

"What, aren't they yours?" He put down the knife. "Mine!" she said with contempt. "I got three beef in. Wasn't there no beefs?"

"There was one beef and that was mine. Ordered 'alf-hour ago," said the waiter. "Fish come?"

"No."

He took the menu from the hand of a newly-arrived customer, impassively crossed out the word "mashed" after "Potatoes," handed it back, and went away.

Two minutes later, when the lift returned, the waitress called him along to look into it. There were four plates, three of them bearing cheese omelettes.

"Gaw," said the waiter. He sprang to the speaking-tube and yelled into it "Smatter with you up there, you got nothing but cheese omelettes? Where's that jug of hot water?"

The waitress was putting things back into the lift, and still with his ear to the tube he reached out and pulled down the door.

"Now then," said the waiter into the speaking-tube. He pressed the button that sent back the lift. "Is beef off? O.K., lemme have another sausage. And there's six cheese omelettes coming up and you can keep 'em."

The newcomer at the counter opened his mouth to give an order, but before he made a sound the waiter took the menu again and crossed out the words "Roast beef" before handing it back.

The customer frowned. Then after examining the menu for a few moments more as if in hopes that it bore some message in code, he tossed it aside with a resigned air and said he would have a cheese omelette.

The waiter's pencil was halfway through the words "Roast beef," on another copy of the menu. He left it there and looked up with his mouth half open. Then he turned his left ear towards the customer and gave an inquiring grunt.

"Cheese omelette," the customer repeated. "And—"

"You want a cheese omelette?" said the waiter hoarsely.

"Why, is it off?"

"Off!" The waiter straightened up and put his pencil behind his ear. He looked from side to side, and then plodded along to the speaking-tube and pressed the button of the buzzer.

The lift came down; there was nothing in it at all. He said commandingly into the speaking-tube "There's a soup and a trifle in! And I want a cheese omelette!" and came away at once.

As he was making out my bill he said darkly "They go mad up there every 'alf-hour."

In my view he gave his statement too limited and precise an application.

R. M.

### Tall Order

"POLICE.—Recruits wtd. urgently throughout the country. Commence £5 5/- per week. Excellent prospects and pensions; ages 20-30. Min. height 8 ft. 8 in."—*Advt. in Liverpool paper.*

"There will be penalties, writes our political correspondent, for fragrant breaches of the permitted quantities of gas and electricity." *Oxford paper.*

Do you smell gas . . . ?

## Signs and Portents

IT was the sight of a little red van running about and adjuring me in big gold letters to USE ELECTRICITY that gave me the idea. I had often heard of the wonders of this form of energy: how it could be converted into heat, light or sound (or even magnetism for those who like it); how it would propel vehicles and repel burglars; how some day it would bring the blessings of refrigeration and electrocution into every home. Some whimsy of the authorities had just thrown me (and a million or two others) into idleness; and before I could save myself from my own impetuosity I had decided to study the whole subject and investigate its practical possibilities.

In a trice I had purchased a manual of electricity; in another I had mastered its contents; in the space of a third I hurried to the luxurious establishment of my favourite amber merchant.

"Good morning," I panted. "Have you any amber?"

"I might have a little," he said guardedly. He is a soured man; since the publication of Mrs. Winsor's historical novel every caller at his shop has been suspect. "What do you want it for?"

"I want to generate some electricity," I explained.

"Ah!" he said, brightening at once. "Then you've come to the right place. How much would you like?"

I bought several pieces, ranging from a delicate morsel not much like a walnut to a handsome lump hardly resembling a football. Fortunately I was already well provided with flannel: my wife believes in flannel for men, and under her loving care my wardrobe has gradually come to contain vast stocks of it—and little else.

She sighed wistfully when I told her I hoped to electrify the sitting-room.

"It would be lovely," she agreed. "I've often dreamed of having a light in there—especially at night."

I had long wished to cure her of this absurd habit of dreaming all over the place, and these words gave me just the stimulus I needed. I locked myself in the room and set to work. In three weeks of quiet rubbing I charged all my amber and completely erased two flannel shirts. At the end of that time the atmosphere was (positively) electric; lines of force radiated in all directions, and not a pith-ball in the room (luckily there were very few) was safe.

I then made a stupid blunder by asking my wife to come and observe

my progress. She is a passionate believer in silk for women, always wears several layers of it, and is usually electrified in consequence. I noticed that she was crackling as she entered the room and that sheets of soft blue flame were playing over her form. But I was not prepared for the effect she had on the complex electric field I had created.

It took a mere split-second for my charged bodies to recognize her negative sign; then they reacted. From every corner of the room they came whizzing towards her, while she emitted an inviting stream of sparks to encourage the laggards. But this was unnecessary; they all appeared

promptly, and I had only to stroke them to ascertain that every shred of electric charge had been neutralized and three weeks' labour destroyed.

I did not begin again. I had already bent my mind\* to the problem of converting a charged lump of amber into a source of illumination, but the end of my enforced holiday made it impossible for me to continue the process, and I shall have to wait until the next spanner is thrown into the industrial machine before I can test the conclusion. The description of the final stages must therefore be left—like so much detail in my manual—as an exercise for the reader.

\* Permanently, according to my principal psychiatrist.



"And this is the sunroom."



"... and this signal will be followed by three short blasts to remind you that the American Loan is running out."

## Floods in The Wash

THE sheëp knoä, the cattle knoä—  
they climbs the dyke for 'oäme;  
theär's flood to west, an' tide to eäst  
an' still the watters come.  
But—long afoär—the beästs läëve  
their cloäses by the dreën,  
an' climb the bank in stormy walk  
an' maäke for 'oäme ageën.

Aye, my owd faäther said to us,  
"You baäirns goä out an' plaäy—  
theär's thaw be'ind an' raäin to come:  
but never waäste a daäy!  
For yer'll be ower owd for gaämes  
when aäge 'as won its battle—  
but when yer playin' in them fields,  
yer watch them graäzin' cattle."  
We kept them sheëp on sheëpless farms—  
turned out the beäst wi'out no gress—  
because they knew when floods was comin':  
no dowser's ever in their class . . .  
An' this yeär when the thaw caäme up  
an' w'ippin' winds, an' sleët, an' reën,  
we seëd them beästs get up the bank  
an' maäke for 'oäme ageën.

We've dreëned the land two 'undred yeär  
an' flogged 'er wi' our bulbs an' taätes:  
But time to fen an' watter's nowt—  
they knoäs they're boss, an' oänly waäits . . .  
An' now the watter's in the 'ouse;  
we've haäcres as'll not yield pence:  
the cattle knew, the owd sheëp knew—  
we may 'ave bräins, but they've got sense!

## Still More Culture

I PROPOSE in this article to finish off my remarks about culture by herding together some rather varying manifestations, including pergolas. Readers may say that a pergola is not cultural but a sort of long arch made of branches nailed together with roses growing up and earwigs falling off. Even so, I do think its place in the public's affections can be compared with at least a twelve-inch gramophone record other people recognize in that the public hails it with a cry of "Isn't that a pergola?" Often the pergola's owners had not thought of it in that light but are quite willing to agree, because it makes them more interesting. A gazebo would make them more interesting still, but statisticians tell us these rarely occur in modern life; so rarely that anyone who spent the week-end in a house with a gazebo would be bound to include it in a bread-and-butter letter. Going back to the pergola, I just want to say that it is traditionally allowed to rhyme with burglar and that people brought up with one tend to associate their memory of it with jam and perpetual sunshine.

ANOTHER aspect of culture that rarely occurs is folk-dancing; yet from the fuss aggressive types make when it comes up in conversation you would think it as much a part of life as the telephone or empty match-boxes. (Statisticians aver that if we were to stop twenty people on a crowded pavement and ask each of them if they had ever seen any folk-dancing we should be getting dreadfully in the way.) Most of the public's knowledge of the subject is, therefore, from hearsay or news-reels, and may be summed up as smocks, bells round the ankles, endless hoppity music and a hideous feeling of well-being resulting from olden days combined with exercise. The public's feelings towards maypoles are mellowed; it considers the ribbon-plaiting a fine piece of teamwork, though no doubt foolproof. Other aspects of olden days that go down well are old coaching inns—that is, the sort with photos of themselves near the reception desk—and spinning-wheels. These last are so closely linked with the sort of tea-room you step down into that many people cannot think of spinning-wheels without imagining they are eating scones and little ridged flakes of butter.

NOW for a much sterner form of culture, nothing less than poetry readings. Here again there is more secondhand knowledge than direct experience, but I dare say a good many of my readers have been once to one and have ever since felt proprietary about the poems they heard and the people who read them. Poetry readings take place, in the main, among hard chairs that scrape if people fidget and in a room or hall where there is either nothing to look round at or something—say, a portrait of a dignitary—which for at least the first two poems everyone is too keen or timid to glance towards. Poetry readings consist, as I need hardly mention, of experts reading poetry with terrific expression so as to give the audience its money's worth. (It must be borne in mind that if poetry-lovers sat at home and read their poetry under their breath, free, the business would collapse.) Some poetry readers recite more than read; this is partly to keep an eye on the audience and partly because if you read poetry very expressively you are inclined to shoot away from the print. As for the average members of the audience (I mean people who would be average elsewhere) they undergo some very typical emotions, including initial fervour, a feeling that





"Quick! Follow that taxi."

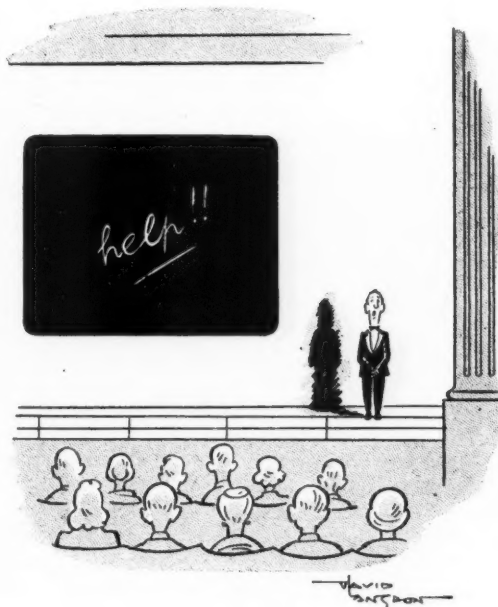
the person in front of them has been there all their lives, some moments of uplift and some serious thinking about what they will eat afterwards. Some people get worried listening to blank verse because they lose the ends of the lines and get behind trying to work them out; others worry about where their other glove has got to. It is all, in fact, highly cultural; perhaps even more than reading poetry to ourselves in buses, where it does not show beyond the person next to us and gets interrupted by anticipation of the conductor or, if we are sitting on the gangway side, by the person next to us beginning that gathering-together business which signifies that at the next stop we shall get the window seat. Very few people reading poetry on buses read as much as they meant to, but it is a step in the right direction.

I SHALL now say something about *objets*, a term covering china dogs, ash-trays people are afraid to use, and plates, cups, saucers and jugs dotted about the room. It is doubtful whether it covers ormolu clocks, because they are apt to be looked at as clocks and their artistic effect is submerged by their inexorability, but I wanted to mention them for the satisfaction they give their owners, who go through life knowing what ormolu means. China dogs are noted for the way they sit up like cats and for the rough squiggly hair round their faces, which are usually turned sideways so as to present the maximum surface area of expression. Artistic ash-trays could be defined as ash-trays which were not made for the purpose if this definition did not include potted-meat jars; it is fairly safe to say that any ash-tray with hollows for cigarette-ends didn't cost more than twelve-and-six (unless bought recently) and will not cause anybody breaking one to feel worse than just awful. Antique plates, jugs and so on make agreeable talking-points and may be turned upside down, to see if anything is stamped on the bottom, without leaving the merely enthusiastic much wiser. People who turn an antique jug upside down and then drop it face a turning-point in life almost unparalleled in social experience; for ever after they will think of themselves as someone the jug's owner thinks of as the person who dropped the jug, and psychologists say that for once they are not exaggerating. Ornamental glass is noted chiefly for the way it does not seem to need polishing until polished, when it puts its former self to shame. I must say a word about the people who, when they come by an odd button or drawing-pin, choose a narrow-necked vase as a place they will be sure to

remember they put it in. The funny thing is that quite often they do remember; but sociologists don't like it. They call it messy, and add that anyone tipping out the average narrow-necked vase gets a good idea of the average household and half a dozen tiny useless objects. I must mention, too, the effect on human nature of the sort of glass paper-weight incorporating little flowers and things. Such a paper-weight is so artistic that its owners know what they are in for as soon as their first visitor picks it up, tilts it and puts it back out of place. As for the snowstorm, this gets even more picked up and tilted, though never in quite the most snow-producing, or owner's, way.

I SHALL end on a musical note by bringing into the open a rarely discussed aspect of concert life; the fear, rife among the more human elements of the audience, that the soloist won't know when to start. It may be the violinist in a violin concerto, waiting to dart in among the welter; or a singer being got under way by a piano; or a 'cellist about to begin a recital and, for all the audience knows, with the strings not even geared up to the right notes. Just before they let themselves go, dead on time, you may be sure that there are one or two ordinary people in the audience sending them waves of sympathy which they know to be unnecessary, for the chief feature of any soloist is confidence, by which I mean having deliberately got into a situation that would never happen to an ordinary person.

THE credit for splitting the atom  
Should rightly, I feel, be assigned  
To my mother-in-law, who, in May '34,  
First gave me a piece of her mind.



"We must apologize for the delay, which is due to a minor outbreak of fire in the projection room."



*"Quick, come out and listen—the cuckoo!"*  
*"I heard it last year, darling."*

### *Second Innings*

**W**ELL, as you know, the army had it  
For six years. It is so overgrown  
You'd never know that there had  
been

A garden there at all.

No, really not, it's like a jungle,  
Or it was—and I don't mind.  
That way you start from scratch  
With a free hand.

My wife (you know my wife),  
She paints a bit,  
And when I'd hacked and burned  
And cleared the ground,  
We sorted out in our mind's eye,  
Just how we'd like the place to look,

And then, to be quite sure,  
She painted it—a sort of blue-print,  
Vision, master plan.  
I must admit it took a bit of seeing.

Of course, it's only just begun  
But taking shape already, even so.  
Next year we'll have a little colour  
In the beds, and the year after that  
Might play a bit of tennis on the lawn.  
The fruit trees will take longer; never mind:  
Five years should see the garden well in hand.

*The sweet, complacent lovely words!*  
*"Five years." Two years ago,*  
*Riding the night sky, riding the storm,*  
*He did not even count on seeing the dawn.*



## BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

APRIL 21st

[*Princess Elizabeth*, a finely illustrated book the proceeds of which go to King George's Jubilee Fund, is reviewed on page 358 of this issue.]



**TUESDAY, April 15th.**—

Mr. HUGH DALTON, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, always has something of the air of a conjurer. It would never surprise the House if he leaned over the table—his height enables him to do that with ease, if not with ballet-like grace—and took a handful of gleaming half-crowns from the ear, or the lapel, of Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL, sitting opposite. His sweeping movements of the hand often suggest the "few passes" the professional conjurer employs to confuse the issue, and his suave, witty, smooth-flowing patter would do no discredit to the most polished of drawing-room performers.

When, therefore, Mr. DALTON entered the House of Commons this afternoon, to give his rendering of the Great Post-War Budget-Balancing Trick, there was a cheer of eager anticipation. Mr. DALTON acknowledged the applause with the kind of grandiloquent gesture lesser conjurers are apt to make, and then sat down in the wings to await the rising of the curtain.

Expert showman that he is, he had had placed on the table (before the audience arrived) a gleaming silver coffee-pot with a long spout, and beside it a glass covered by a white card. These "props" had a fascinating effect on the House, and few Members took their eyes off them until the Performer himself entered. Then the Stage Manager, Major JAMES MILNER, who is also Chairman of Ways and Means, stepped into the chair, and ordered up the curtain. Up it went at 3.29 P.M. precisely (as they say in the playbills) and The Great DALTON, Juggler, Equilibrist, Conjurer and Entertainer, held the stage for three hours, three minutes.

It was a brilliant (if rather long) performance. Never once did his expansive good-humour desert him, never once did the slightest murmur from the audience pass without a flick of repartee in return. The suspense was well maintained, too, and the audience was kept, for the most of the time, on the alert.

Once or twice there was a sense of anti-climax—as when Mr. D. promised to produce a "litter of rabbits" (he never was one for the retail trade) from his Departmental hat. There was a rustle of excited anticipation. And then it was seen that one of the rabbits was labelled "*Returned from NAAFI*," another "*Not wanted by U.K.T.C.*"—and so on, and the audience lost interest in the part-worn rodents. It was the Chancellor's

## Impressions of Parliament

*Business Done:*

**Tuesday, April 15th.**—House of Commons: Rabbits and Things Out of a Hat.

**Wednesday, April 16th.**—House of Lords: Tributes to the Marquess of Salisbury.

House of Commons: Budget Attack Begins.

**Thursday, April 17th.**—House of Commons: More About the Budget.

picturesque way of announcing that he proposed to collect back from various official organizations some of the money overpaid to them during the war. With this—and other cash—he hoped to build up a favourable balance. To Balance the Budget, in fact.

Polite applause.

A few of the experts looked on with that "I-know-how-it's-done" expression as he proceeded, with a breathless grunt or two, to hoist the whole contraption on to his shoulders and then, with set gaze, walk gingerly a few paces to right and left. By then the act had been on for one hour, fifty-nine



Impressions of Parliamentarians

1. MR. W. GALLACHER (W. Fife)

minutes, and everybody thought The Great DALTON was approaching his grand finale.

But not at all. Bowing slightly in response to the cheers that greeted his balancing trick, he poured from the magic coffee-pot a stream of brownish fluid which the knowing proclaimed to be rum-and-milk. Whatever it was, it certainly gave him a new lease of life, and diving into the battered red dispatch-box—the one Mr. Gladstone used—he produced another lot of papers.

Then the surprise twist which all really good conjurers like to introduce into their tricks. As soon as the Budget was neatly balanced the performer signalled for silence—and announced

that, in spite of appearances and in spite of the prospective surplus at the end of the financial year, there was nothing much to be given away.

The audience did not take too kindly to this bit of patter, preferring appearing to disappearing tricks. But Mr. DALTON was firm about it and went on (like a clown

breaking the boss's best china piece by piece as he tries a too-difficult trick) to smash one hope after another. With a flick of the wrist, he flung into the air a brightly coloured plate labelled "*Income Tax Cuts*"—only to let it fall with a clatter to the floor. From the wreckage he picked a few pieces which he smilingly explained represented improvements in personal earned income allowances.

One or two Members of the audience applauded hopefully. There followed a fusillade of silk-hats, tea-pots, account-books, walking-sticks and other impedimenta, as the Chancellor went into a one-man adagio act. When he had finished, panting, but still bowing and smiling, the audience had an impression that a few more concessions had been made, a few more very complicated new taxes produced.

It was all a bit breath-taking. But from the enthusiasm shown by the Chancellor it was evident that the performance had been a good one, so the Government side cheered quite loudly, if a trifle uncomprehendingly. Mr. CHURCHILL alone showed plainly that he was not amused, and sat eyeing the whole turn suspiciously.

Then, with a great burst of eager cheering from the crowd behind him, Mr. D. uttered the one word "*Tobacco!*" This time, he showed his versatility by a weight-lifting performance. With a picturesque stagger and groan, he hoisted a vast weight labelled "*Tobacco from U.S.A., £55,000,000.*" This, he announced, panting, was too heavy, and we must cut it down by at least a quarter. The way to do it was to give up smoking altogether, or, if that was too great a strain, make our cigarettes last longer, see that our stubs were shorter.

And, just to help the audience (and the bigger audience outside) to do the trick, he proposed to increase the tax on tobacco by about fifty per cent. Even the most egotistical of performers could not have failed to be gratified by the whistle of amazement which resulted. When he added that twenty cigarettes would cost 3s. 4d. instead of 2s. 4d., one could have heard an atom-bomb drop.



"Personally, I can't see that there'll ever be the slightest demand for this stuff in the old country."

Mr. PIRATIN, the Communist backbencher, who had heard with admirable restraint the announcements about increases in estate duties and such like, rose up and announced that the latest trick was "a shame!" He also offered to make a speech there and then, but Mr. DALTON waved him down imperiously and, in a silence that may (or may not) have been due to speechless admiration, swept on to his final curtain. With one more swig at the coffee-pot, the act was over.

Mr. ANTHONY EDEN at once jumped up to say that the whole show had been over-elaborate and expensive and that, while everybody must admire the strength and skill of the conjurer and juggler, he could have performed the *pièce de résistance* much more effectively by cutting down the dead weight of spending, instead of building up the dead weight of taxation. However, said Mr. EDEN, more (probably a good deal more) on that subject anon. The Conservative benches contain a financial wizard or two, so perhaps a few rival versions of the Great Budget Trick will be seen in due course.

**WEDNESDAY, April 16th.**—Tributes were paid in the House of

Lords to the memory of the Marquess of SALISBURY, whose slim figure and melodious voice had for so long added distinction to the House, of which for many years he was Leader. There were sincere condolences with his son, Lord CRANBORNE, Leader of the Opposition, who now bears the family title. The House adjourned as a sign of respect.

In the Commons, Sir JOHN ANDERSON, himself a financial conjurer and juggler of no mean achievement (and in case the Committee of Privileges is looking, your scribe hastens to add that that is meant in the nicest possible sense) offered a criticism of the work of Mr. DALTON. It was that, in spite of all the groans and by-play; the Budget had not really been balanced at all. In fact, said Sir JOHN sternly, it was all a matter of shifts and devices—and niggling ones at that.

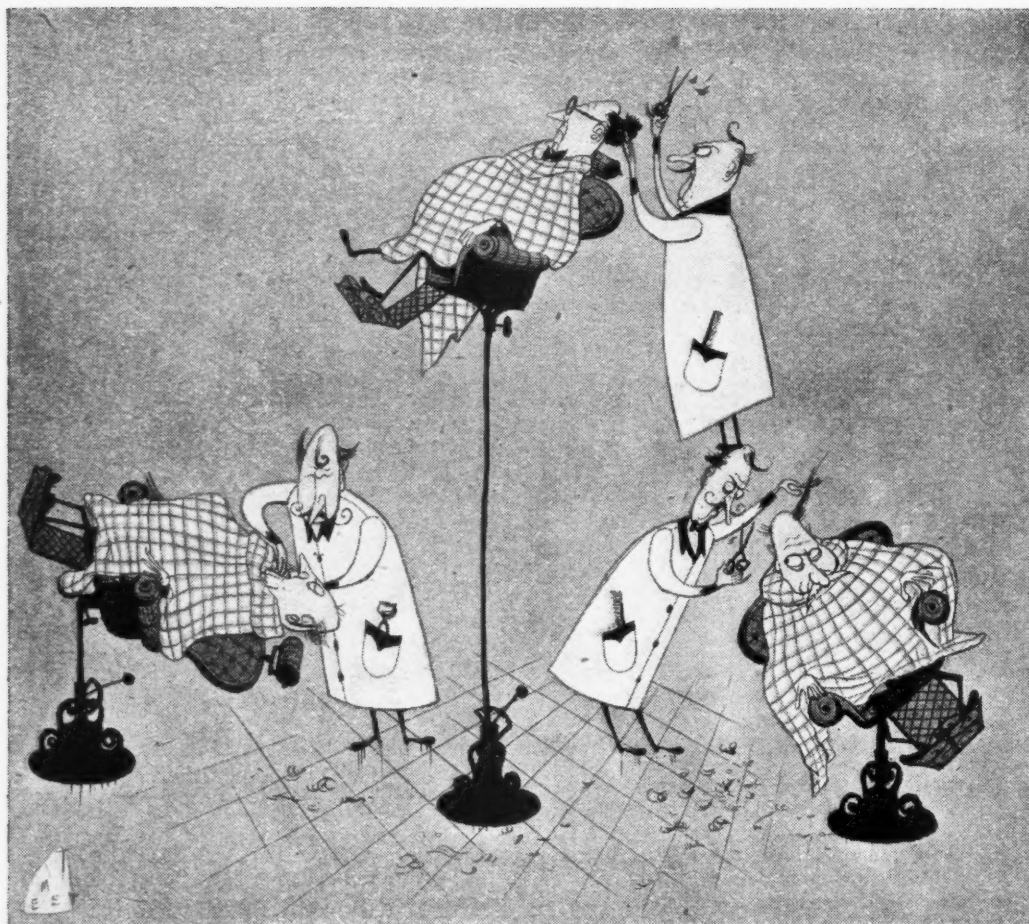
Nor did Mr. CLEMENT DAVIES, the Liberal leader, who also thought a spot of economy would have made the whole trick more impressive and have earned some genuine applause. So it went on, with an occasional defender of the Chancellor making a speech sandwiched between two criticizing him. Mr. WILL GLENVIL HALL,

Mr. D.'s able lieutenant, wound up the debate with a forthright claim that the balancing trick *had* been done and that it would be done again, whenever The Great Dalton felt like doing it. As for the heavy new duty on tobacco—well, the best way to avoid that was to take to heart the "No Smoking" notices.

Before the talk on the Budget was resumed, Mr. Speaker ruled that there was a *prima-facie* case of breach of privilege against Mr. GARRY ALLIGHAN, Labour Member for Gravesend. He was reported by Mr. QUINTIN HOGG to have written an article making allegations of insobriety and revelation of Party secrets against M.P.s, and of corrupt practices by Lobby journalists. Mr. HOGG found these charges "disgusting" and moved that the Committee of Privileges consider them.

The House, without a dissentient voice, passed the motion.

**THURSDAY, April 17th.**—The discussion of the Budget was continued to-day, and any visitor who had been present on the previous days might have been excused for saying "This is where we came in," so like previous orations were most of the speeches.



*"... well-known cinema organist or something."*

## The Cosmic Mess

THIS column was present, as usual, at the Annual Conference of the Amalgamated Association of Co-operative Nail-Hammerers, held this year in one of the spacious hotels of Chatter-on-Sca. The Conference is not what it was. In the old days the delegates had much to say about nail-hammering, about the wages and conditions of the nail-hammerers, the status of the nail-hammerer, the question whether he would not be better known as a "metal insertion operator," and so forth. Even, from time to time, there would be talk of improving the methods of nail-hammering. Now all is different. Almost everything is debated but nail-hammering. Ever since the years before the war the first resolution has been about

Foreign Affairs: and, as a rule, it is a resolution condemning the foreign policy of Great Britain. During the war this resolution was sometimes displaced by a resolution demanding a Second Front To-morrow, More Tanks for Russia, the invasion of Spain, the dismissal of one or two Ambassadors, and so on. What there is in a life of nail-hammering that gives a man such a special insight into Foreign Affairs this column cannot tell; but clearly there is something. And, according to the Nail-Hammerers, within the memory of living man the foreign policy of Great Britain has never been right yet.

This year the delegates were not content to condemn the foreign policy of Great Britain. In a strongly-worded

resolution they condemned the foreign policy of the United States. President Truman received a slap or two which must have made him sit up. The foreign policy of France was let off with a caution. The Conference ordered the British Government to "evacuate" Greece at once and invade Spain on the way home; to break away from "American Imperialism" and come to an understanding with Russia "on a basis of" this, that, and the other. Almost the only country whose foreign policy came off scot-free was Russia. Indeed, looking back, this column cannot recall a single Conference at which Russia's foreign policy was wrong. The proceedings closed with a fraternal address from Comrade Creak, of the National Screw-Drivers, who



said he stood for peace on earth and the class-war.

\* \* \* \* \*

This column is always keen on any argument which goes to show that Oxford did not really lose the Boat Race; and it salutes Mr. W.N. McClean, who, in a letter to *The Times*, made out a very good case. He says that the following "launches" (including one steamer) were far too close to poor Oxford and were "drawing back" the water in which they rowed. "There may have been 500 to 1,000 h.p. showing the water astern and consequently drawing back the water from ahead. . . . Oxford were rowing uphill. . . . In twenty minutes this would roughly mean five to ten row-boat lengths."

Well, well. Now we know. The theory certainly does explain what was a mystery to most men. This column, though it has been applauding eight-oared boats, and the great Bourne family, for thirty-five years, has never mastered the fine points of rowing. If they splash, it knows they are a bad crew; and, if they don't splash, they are pretty good. Oxford looked pretty good as they passed this column: and others tell me that they went on looking pretty good. But nothing seemed to happen. Of course, if they were being pulled back by 500-1,000 horse-power, nothing much could happen. The wonder is that they finished the course at all. What a pity that they did not dart away at the start and let Cambridge have the horses astern!

\* \* \* \* \*

Delightfully entertained the other day by a number of eminent surgeons and physicians, this column innocently inquired whether any of them could recite the famous Oath of Hippocrates, the ancient Greek "Father of Medicine". They all, with one accord, began to make excuse. But one of the company has now kindly sent the Oath by post. "Hippocrates," says the informant, "belonged to what we should now call a medical guild or profession, and for those who joined it an Oath was drawn up that was solemnly sworn and observed. The general belief is that Hippocrates wrote the Oath, which is translated as follows in a recent volume of the Loeb Library:

"I will look upon him who has taught me this art even as those who bore me; I will share with him my substance, and supply his necessities if need be; I will regard his offspring as my own brethren, and I will teach them this art, if they desire to learn it, without fee or stipulation.

"I will impart it by precept, by lecture, and by all other modes of instruction to my own sons, to the sons of him who taught me, and to disciples bound by covenant and oath according to the law of the physicians, but to no other.

"The treatment I adopt shall be for the benefit of my patients, according to my ability and judgement, and not for their injury nor for any evil purpose. I will not give a deadly drug to anyone, though it be asked of me, nor will I lead the way in such counsel. I will keep my life and my art pure and holy.

"Whatsoever house I enter, there will I go for the benefit of the sick, refraining from all wrong-doing and corruption. Whatsoever I see or hear concerning the life of men, in my attendance on the sick or even apart therefrom, which ought not to be spoken of abroad, I will keep silence thereon, counting the secrecy of such things to be sacred.

"If I fulfil this Oath and break it not, be it mine to enjoy life and art alike, with good repute among all men for all time. If I transgress it and forswear myself may the contrary befall me!"

No wonder, perhaps, that none could recite an Oath so long. And the surgeons said it applied to the physicians only. But it is good—*n'est ce pas?*—and it explains a lot that we know about both—the amount of work and teaching they do for nothing, for example. Many others of the known traditions are there, though this column can find nothing about "no advertisement". Nor can this column find anything in it to discourage the doctor from dealing firmly with the "unofficial striker," who, while doing his best to starve or freeze the doctor, expects the doctor to go on working fifteen hours a day—and then, perhaps, turn out at three in the morning. An unofficial doctors' strike or two, at

the right times and places, might have a highly healing effect.

\* \* \* \* \*

How different that Oath, by the way, from the "inevitability of class-warfare"!

\* \* \* \* \*

Talking of strikes—the simple dockers, this column sees, is talking of striking, with the battle-cry "No redundancy!" One day, no doubt, he will carry a banner calling for "OPTIMUM REDUNDANCY." And folk still say that the Latin language is "dead".

\* \* \* \* \*

Double Summer Time is here; and Big Ben, this column remarks again, is crying Moscow Time. (What a gesture!) Surely H.M. Gov. could have softened the shock of their National Service surrender by using the Summer Time technique. H.M. Gov. have put down an amendment to say that the term of compulsory National Service shall be twelve months, not eighteen. How blunt—how brusque! No wonder all the pigeons are after the cats! They should have left the main clause as it was, and added a simple proviso:

"Provided that, for the purposes of this Clause, twelve months shall be deemed to be eighteen."

Then the great race that cheerfully swallows Double Summer Time would have smiled, and swallowed again.

\* \* \* \* \*

This column, by the way, has a clear "mandate" in that affair. For in its Election Address (1945) it said: "Every fit young man should serve, say, 18 months (with a limited choice as to age) in one of the Armed Forces." Wot, no Mandate? A. P. H.

## Table Topic

LOT said, "It's no use regretting; You should never look back in this life.

I find it is merely upsetting— That's how I lost my wife. I was sorry of course, but, dear me, Really it wasn't my fault. Still, I feel she is always near me. Will somebody pass the salt?"

M. H.

## "YACHTS

"Now that the season is over, Blakes advise you to have the engine of your Cabin Cruiser overhauled and stored for the winter months."

Advt. in Liverpool paper on March 7th.

Short summer, wasn't it?



IN Miss CLEMENCE DANE'S *Call Home the Heart* at the St. James's there are two complementary but distinct themes, one, a marriage so long on the rocks that it is firmly silted in, the other, a war match weighed in an unusually scrupulous balance before being certified as likely to survive and flourish. If the treatment of the first is the more spectacularly successful this is partly because the character of *Mrs. Fraser* is fantastic and unalterable, like that of the Albert Memorial, and her relationship with her forbearing and long-resigned husband something to be understood and sympathized with at a glance; and partly because DAME SYBIL THORNDIKE plays the unhappy woman with a satiric brilliance which would be very hard to beat. We all know a *Mrs. Fraser*. She is not a bad woman; indeed, she has most of the virtues, except restfulness, tact, and intelligence. Any of the three can quite pleasantly be missing, but their combined lack is a heavy burden on a husband. *Dr. Fraser* has lived for his son, killed in the war, and quietly continues to share a house with a woman with whom he cannot share a thought.

The problem of *Mrs. Fraser's* daughter, *Lydia*, is far more involved, and though Miss DANE presents it with a skilful use of a dramatic trick, it is not quite so effectively stated. *Lydia's* husband, *Colin*, comes back from a P.O.W. camp bringing with him, shattered by prison and dying, his best friend, *Roylance*, who has been her lover for a short time during the war. She herself is on the edge of a nervous breakdown, haunted by the sights and sounds of a sinking hospital ship, trying desperately to sort out delusion from reality and avoid a repetition of her parents' tragic muddle. Her husband is cool, sensible and determined to match her honesty with patience; he also has had his doubts. In the end it is the lover who resolves them. This is a perfectly convincing end, only the lover's own character and the manner of his persuasion seeming a little out of joint.

The play is so well made that one

## At the Play

CALL HOME THE HEART (ST. JAMES'S)—VOLPONE (SAVOY)

wishes that Miss DANE would write more often for the theatre. As a serious attempt to deal with the war marriage it cuts deep, and the comedy of *Mrs. Fraser's* hopeless helpfulness is unerringly mixed into it. Miss THORNDIKE is magnificent. Opposite her Mr. LEON QUARTERMAINE might be thought to exhibit too quiet a melancholy until one remembers what a life the poor

comforting *Roylance*, who is making-believe about his future, and is checked by a minute gesture from the watchful *Colin*.

Minute, but how effective.

One of the pleasures, in a two-course world, of seeing *Volpone* on the heels of *The Alchemist*—and who calls me greedy condemns himself a hypocrite—is making a considered choice between the extensive range of snacks proposed by *Sir Epicure* to *Dol Common* and the curter but no less picturesque menu offered as a bait by *Volpone* to *Celia*. It takes a very strong-minded girl to say No to:

"... mullets,  
Soused in high-country  
wines, sup pheasants'  
eggs  
And have our cockles  
boiled in silver shells;  
Our shrimps to swim again,  
as when they lived,  
In a rare butter made of  
dolphins' milk,  
Whose cream does look  
like opals,"

but the gastronomic goodwill behind the general outline of:

"The heads of parrots,  
tongues of nightingales,  
The brains of peacocks,  
and of estriches,  
Shall be our food, and,  
could we get the phoenix,  
Though nature lost her  
kind, she were our dish,"

is also hardly to be sneezed at. *Volpone* is not such an even play as *The Alchemist*. It has the two great comic scenes where *Volpone* shams sick to extract gifts

from his potential heirs, and pushes bogus simples, in the guise of a mountebank, under *Celia's* window, but the final unmasking of the fox is too intricate a maze of business. The play's rich dividend is the spate of wonderful and windy language which pours from *Volpone*, and for this Mr. DONALD WOLFE, with his full and mannered enunciation, is an admirable vehicle. Pressing his villain suit on the wilting *Celia*, tapping BEN's vintage phrases straight from the wood, backpedalling in the great bed in an ecstasy of deceit as the dupes hang gloating over him, he is unmistakably a magnifico of Venice. The production itself



[Call Home the Heart

### WELL-MEANING BUT UPSETTING

<i>Lydia</i> . . . . .	MISS VALERIE WHITE
<i>Alan Fraser, M.D., F.R.C.S.</i> . . . . .	MR. LEON QUARTERMAINE
<i>Mrs. Fraser</i> . . . . .	DAME SYBIL THORNDIKE
<i>Colin</i> . . . . .	MR. WILLIAM FOX

*Doctor* has been living; his resignation is so habitual that the outburst Miss DANE allows him appears jarring and mistimed. The difficult part of *Lydia* Miss VALERIE WHITE sustains with flying colours, adding to her ardent realism a sympathy which is very moving. Mr. WILLIAM FOX, who I am sure is one of the best of our young actors, gives a fine performance as the husband, and Mr. BRYAN COLEMAN plays the magnanimous lover with discretion, even though the character remains elusive. If one instance may be given of the care of Mr. CHARLES HICKMAN'S production, it is the moment when *Lydia* is on the point of

is not exciting. It is a little shabby to the eye, a little careless (*Mosca* isn't even disguised for the patent-medicine sequence) and in the court scenes a little too eager for the easy laugh. Mr. JOHN WYNYARD is an active, resourceful *Mosca*, Miss ROSALIND IDEN a virtuous *Celia*, and Mr. ALEXANDER GAUGE a *Corvino* of distinct comic merit. ERIC.

## Stop-Cocks

IT is just my luck that by the time this article gets into print England will have been sweltering in a heat-wave, and everybody will have lost interest in stop-cocks, but all I can say is that when I wrote it the B.B.C. had stated with what I can only describe as ghoulis satisfaction that the prospects of a thaw in the near future were extremely remote.

Incidentally it was the B.B.C. that started me thinking about stop-cocks in the first place. A woman gave a talk about plumbing and she said that her plumber friends avowed that very few people in England knew where their stop-cocks were.

I therefore said to Edith: "Where is our stop-cock?"

"In the attic," she said, "next to the bust of Julius Caesar."

I went up to the attic and got all over cobwebs and knocked myself nearly senseless on a beam, and then came down again disgruntled.

"There is no stop-cock in the attic," I said.

"Of course not," she said. "I was reading about a man of one hundred and two who remembered falling through the ice on the Thames in 1895 when you asked me about the stop-cock, and so I thought you said ball-cock, which is quite a different thing and is in the cistern next to the statue of Mark Antony."

"You said Julius Caesar," I protested.

"They are just the same, except for the nose," she replied. "Actually I believe the stop-cock is out in the road by the front gate."

I didn't feel in the mood for locating it at that particular moment, but we froze up in the early hours of the next morning, so I went out with a torch and wandered round in the snow for about forty minutes until I found it. Then I turned it off and went back to bed.

We were still frozen next morning, so I called next door on Johnson-Clitheroe, who is a chartered accountant and therefore has all his pipes protected by sacking and sawdust,



"My dear, guess what I saw in Mrs. Smith's pram—a baby!"

and begged a drop of water, if he wasn't frozen up.

"Of course I'm not," he said indignantly. "Forewarned is forearmed and a stitch in time saves nine. Nothing could freeze my pipes, the way I've got them protected."

I held my bucket under his tap, and nothing came.

"Funny," he said.

"Screamingly," I replied, and went to beg water from the house on the other side. Our own water came on later in the day, and about tea-time a very shamefaced Johnson-Clitheroe arrived with a bucket.

"I really can't imagine how I've got frozen up," he said, "but the fact remains that I am. So good of you..."

He trotted off with his bucket, and for the next four days was in and out practically all the time. The rest of us were alternately frozen and thawed, but Johnson-Clitheroe was permanently frozen. Not a drop of water came through his pipes.

One evening our landlord called in a rather hopeless effort to get the rent, and in the course of conversation he said he hoped we found our stop-cock.

"It's under the sink," he said.

Naturally I crept out straight away and turned Johnson-Clitheroe's water on again, but he has completely lost faith in sacking and sawdust, which he says obviously only serves to keep the cold in the pipes.





"This is a Gallup poll to find out whether Britain is losing her sense of humour."

### Our Booking Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

#### The Happy Princess

At a moment when many of us are inclined to peevishness because the fruits of peace, springing from victory in the worst war on record, still are somewhat immature, it is pleasant to receive so cheerful a book as *Princess Elizabeth* (ODHAMS, 6/-). It appears as we are all thinking of the King's elder daughter and the birthday that has seen her come of age, and Mr. DERMOT MORRAH, assisted by Mrs. BETTY SPENCER SHEW, has made it a model of what such books should be. Subtly, but clearly, he shows the Princess against the background of history past and in the foreground of history present and to be. There are no purple patches, no adulation, but the letterpress and, no less, the reproductions of more than a hundred photographs make the reader aware of their subject as a happy young girl, hopeful, enthusiastic but not crude, royally ready to serve, humorous but kind. Sentenced the Princess may be "to the lifetime of unremitting service, without hope of retirement even in old age, which is inseparable from the highest place of all," but in her merry laugh, the healthy young charm of her face and figure, her delight in the good simple things of everyday life—dogs, horses, the theatre, dancing—no less than in her serious attention to her growing responsibilities, she is shown here as what her parents have obviously tried to make her, a good example of the best of her generation, the British of the immediate future. A hopeful augury! Appropriately the proceeds of this book go to King George's Jubilee Fund.

B. E. S.

#### Mr. Val Gielgud

In *Years of the Locust* (NICHOLSON AND WATSON, 9/6) Mr. VAL GIELGUD, who joined the B.B.C. in its early days at Savoy Hill and has had an important share in developing the broadcast play and radio features generally, has given a clear, interesting and not unduly self-depreciatory account of his varied and successful career. Polish on one side, and a Terry on the other, Mr. GIELGUD did not fit into school-life, but blames himself not Rugby, though the reader of this book may have a slight difficulty in recognizing some at least of the defects with which he charges himself—"a constitutional laziness, a disinclination to face unpleasant facts, a love of the good things of life, and that softness of heart which is inseparable from a certain softness of head!" After some pleasantly idle years at Oxford, Mr. GIELGUD sallied forth into life, was secretary to an M.P., sub-edited a comic paper, tried the stage, and finally came to rest at Savoy Hill. "Savoy Hill," he writes, "was alive. Machine had not yet mastered man." A certain nostalgia for those days invests with unusual warmth his praise of Sir John Reith's work at Savoy Hill, and his somewhat more measured tribute to his colleagues there, notably Mr. Lance Sieveking. But he has much of value to say on behalf of broadcasting in its later developments. These general reflections are diversified with descriptions of his travels, the most memorable and brilliant being an account of a visit to Hollywood.

H. K.

#### China 1939

One doubts whether the novel written with an eye to the film could ever be a good novel, or experiences visualized as matter for broadcasting ever produce a really readable narrative. The rhetorical outlook and manner are unhelpful to *China-Burma Vagabond* (MULLER, 15/-) as a book; but then Mr. H. B. RATTENBURY's travels of 1939 were, you gather, primarily undertaken to address and report on Methodist missions in China. For the reader prepared to take a keen interest in the missions, or their settings, or both, the lack of precision and intimacy in these amplified journal-jottings is disheartening. After religion, which is unnecessarily soft-pedalled, plumbing is the diarist's chief concern. He seems quite unaware of the immemorial agriculture which the lack of plumbing subserves; and though he frequently admires a lovely garden, he never tells you what is in it. His best chapter describes the Miao settlement at Stone Gateway near Chaoting and its pioneer pastor, Samuel Pollard. He is commendably restrained over the Japanese—even going so far as to assert that being stripped and searched was a formality no Japanese would have resented. At least one high official, he records, offered to undress himself in British company to show there was nothing in it.

H. P. E.

#### The Bed

*The Bed or The Clinophile's Vade-Mecum* (NICHOLSON AND WATSON, 12/6), an anthology edited with a running commentary by CECIL and MARGERY GRAY and illustrated by MICHAEL AYRTON, surveys the bed from the earliest up to modern times. There are four sections, Beds of Antiquity, Mediæval Beds, Renaissance Baroque and Rococo Beds, Romantic and Modern Beds; but it cannot be said that this historical framework, which, it is claimed, gives the book a form lacking in most anthologies, really succeeds in transforming an entertaining miscellany into the literary or philosophical landmark suggested by—"In view of the

enormous importance of the rôle played by The Bed in human affairs it is surprising to note that no book devoted to this absorbing topic has as yet been published in any country or in any period." It would probably have been more satisfactory to group the extracts not historically but according to the main aspects under which the bed appears at all times and in all countries. As it is, the Birth-bed, the Marriage-bed and the Death-bed are jumbled together with effects which are sometimes amusing, but more often bewildering. However, everyone is here, from Homer and Plato to Modigliani and T. S. Eliot, from the Psalmist to Maupassant, to whom the editors accord the honour of rounding off the book in an apostrophe which passes from "Nothing is superlative outside The Bed" to the even more sweeping declaration "The Bed is the Man."

H. K.

### Doomsday Up-to-date

Mass-Observation's account of typical English communities, which opens with *Exmoor Village* (HARRAP, 15/-), combines Mass-Observation's habit of "looking at social habits and the human stuff behind them" with the more sensitive and long-sighted regard of an excellent editor and—in this case—author. Mr. W. J. TURNER admits the book's likeness to a film: and indeed it does roll out facts and colour-photography to much the same effect. But photographs like "The Village Shop" bear meditation—even if large close-ups of the villagers' faces are merely embarrassing. The village itself, Luccombe in Somersetshire, is chosen as one of the few remaining examples of an agricultural community whose interests—and earnings—are invested in its own homes and gardens. Possibly, it is hinted, we have here the happy alternative to that urbanized life which is "so seductive in prospect" and "devitalizing in effect." Luccombe is eighteen miles from the cinema and one and a half from the bus. Unfortunately there is nothing to read except the popular press; and the schoolmistress (Staffordshire) is up against the "lack of initiative" that sends the girls and boys contentedly to service and the neighbouring farms.

H. P. E.

### Melodrama in the Med.

Whether because of temperament or time, acting and novel-writing seldom go together. An exception, however, is Mr. ANTHONY QUAYLE, one of the most original Iagos London has seen in years and also the author of *On Such a Night* (HEINEMANN, 7/6), a brief but dramatic extravaganza of the Mediterranean in the war. His second novel, it shows the same fertility and robust craftsmanship which distinguish his work on the stage, and its situation is certainly unexpected. A British Cabinet Minister is spending a night at Palleria, a first cousin to Malta, on his way to sell himself to the enemy; and the Governor, a general of whom the Minister has lately made a scapegoat, being tipped off by Security about his guest's intentions, is faced by a problem for which there is no precedent and no obvious solution. How Mr. QUAYLE finds one, violent, exciting and in the main plausible, must remain his secret; enough to say that he handles it cunningly and even admits a glamorous lady for the sake of those who hold that without romance thrill is but a mockery. He gets character without waste of words, and has the same talent for making the unexpressed feelings of his minor people seem urgently part of the story that Vicki Baum used so tellingly in her earlier novels. Government House, with its artificial

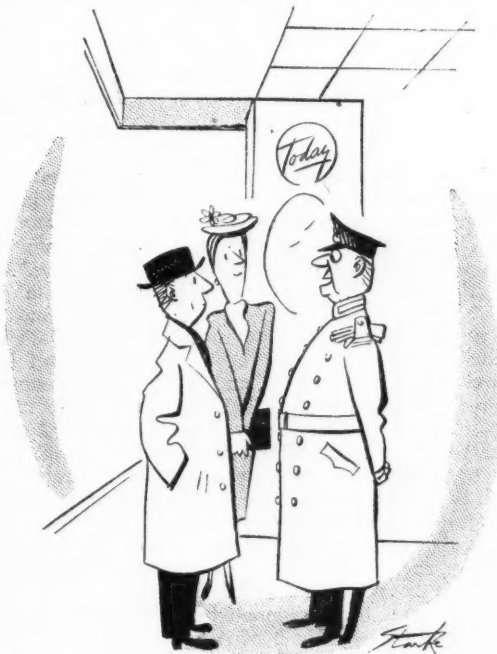
homeliness and its uneasy tension of official informality, is cleverly drawn, and no junior officer whose war was blackened by V.I.P.s will read the book without sardonic pleasure.

E. O. D. K.

### The Long and the Short of It

Mr. T. H. WHITE always writes beautifully and his imagination is lit by magic, but his latest book, *Mistress Masham's Repose* (JONATHAN CAPE, 8/6), is likely to be disappointing to those of us who were held in the spell of *The Sword in the Stone* and *The Ill-Made Knight*. The idea that survivors of the Lilliputians, whose ancestors had been brought to England by Gulliver's "Captain Biddle," should be discovered on a lake-island by a lonely child of ten has the greatest possibilities. The Lilliputians are excellent, but the humans, except for the girl, Maria, live in such high state of hyperbole that while straining after them we swallow the Lilliputians almost without noticing them, and this is all wrong. The wicked governess and the bad vicar (both trying to plot away the child's inheritance), the kind and too, too absent-minded professor are absurd and extravagant. We know practically nothing of the home life of Alice, but were assured of it by her sweet normality and could have believed every word of a book in which *she* had strayed to an island and had armies raised for her and had listened to tiny music. Yet there is nothing wrong with Maria. "She had dark hair in two pig-tails, and brown eyes the colour of marmite, but more shiny . . . and her nature was a loving one." Perhaps the trouble may be that for Mr. WHITE Queen Anne is dead and these surviving Lilliputians are only the ghosts of themselves. The sooner he harks back again to Malory and a more robust philosophy the happier we shall be as well.

B. E. B.



"To put it mildly it's stupendous, terrific, colossal."



*"If you'd only let me shout out when I wanted to in Act One none of this need have happened."*

## Back at the Wheel

VIII—Reviewing It

**I**T is now three months since the Good Goer knocked at the door of my heart and exploded its way in, and although with all its faults (knocking included) I love it still, I think the time has come to take stock.

If I am to believe my dashboard the car has carried me more than a hundred miles since January, and has devoured twenty-seven gallons of petrol, if I am to believe my basic ration. Even leaving out the oil (which I have occasionally been careless enough to do) this does not seem very economical. It might be economical for a single-engined aircraft, but not for a 9 h.p. car.

However, let me be fair. All this petrol has not been detonated in terms of road-miles. Much of it has been burned away by recumbent men in oil-sodden caps who have agitated the accelerator mechanism by hand

while other men have looked on with the admiring absorption of medical students at a rare and gruesome operation, gasping excitedly, "Coo, look at the tappets," or "It's cracked, Charlie, see it from here." Much more has been siphoned off by unknown persons, shadowy night figures with buckets and bits of hose-pipe, and some has splashed out during those periods when the tank-cap has come off its string. And I have no idea what became of the painful that a Hatch End garage drained off to recover my bit of scaled measuring-stick.

But those are the figures. Directly or indirectly it has taken twenty-seven gallons of the precious spirit to get me over a hundred miles of highway. At first I mentioned to garage-hands that I was only getting about three and a half miles to the gallon, hoping that they would tighten some nut or other and put things right. They

didn't even take their hands out of their pockets, but talked learnedly about re-bores, de-cokes, gaskets, tiskets, taskets and other obscurities. So now I am resigned. After all, there must be many motorists who would be pleased to find a quarter's petrol bill only coming to about £2 14s.

I have tried to take this point of view, telling myself that a train would not carry me much more than a hundred miles for the money. And who wants to travel by train? Not I. Not after the exclusiveness of the Good Goer. Still, I am trying to be a business-man over this, and I must remember that petrol-costs are only a single item. I am not required, for instance, to license a train at three-pounds-odd a quarter, nor to insure it at a like amount. I do not have to garage a train at a pound a week, nor pay men to get under it and tell me



that it won't budge an inch until I obtain a new gugging-nut, which is unobtainable. When I leave a train I'm done with it; I do not have to give half-crowns to men in macintoshes so that they can cross me off in their penny notebooks as a man who can now be forgotten. A train does not keep taking me on the wrong side of policemen, it does not get itself cross-ways on in a cul-de-sac, nor do I have to wash myself to the waist with Scrubbo after a short journey. In fact a train, taking it all round—

But I was saying that petrol is not the only thing. It is an ordinary outgoing, like tax and insurance and garage-rent. So far, my ordinary outgoings work out at about six shillings a mile, which means that a return trip to Brighton could be managed for just over £42; I could afford that, I think, if only I could keep the extraordinary outgoings at bay. But I can't. They are outgoing all the time. One of the most expensive, to date, has been merely for information—consultants' fees, you might say. This kind of thing:

	£	s.	d.
To "Happy Motors," for telling me that nothing can be done about the hand-brake .....	12	6	
To a man called Fred, for ditto .....	10	0	
To a man called Ron, for ditto, after examining patient and prescribing new fugget (unobtainable) .....	7	6	
To a Mr. Fuddle, for telling me where to get my door-lock mended .....	2	6	
To "Allspares," for telling me door-lock obsolete, and trying to sell me new door .....	5	9	
To "Ritzcarlton Automobiles," for telling me not to drive without fitting a new back wheel..	1	2	6

There is an extraordinary outgoing from the battery, too. A man called Victor has told me that I want a new lug (half-a-crown for the advice), and although I paid a lorry-driver two shillings for the address of a friend of his who would make me one (and who has merely kept my stamped addressed envelope—my cheapest transaction of this kind so far) I am bearing the lug in mind. I may see one advertised some day. In the meantime I have bought a small wooden cart (thirty shillings) in which I wheel the battery round to Mooley's Garage on Sunday

mornings, where a man called Len charges it for me (five shillings) and lets me leave the cart in a corner (a shilling). Then I can wheel the battery back on Monday so that those men currently working on the Good Goer will have enough electricity to plug in their examination lamps. It usually lasts the week, unless they are working on the wiper again.

"What you want to do," a man called Ted told me, "is lay off the starter and hooter and wiper and lights and traffic-indicators and give the old car a good running. Try to knock up about four or five hundred miles a week."

"I'll start to-night," I said.

"You can't do that," said Ted, "because me and Bill and Perce and the man with glasses that turned up last night—"

"Bert."

"—we've got your magneto in pieces."

He said they couldn't put it together again until the battery was charged, so I got out the little cart and set off for Mooley's. Ted shouted after me that he would give me a tip. What I wanted was a new battery.

Considering everything, I think the first step towards economy is to cut

down labour costs. I have too many people working for me, that's the trouble. It's my own fault, I know. I am too enthusiastic about the Good Goer. I tell too many people about it.

Anxious to help, they either turn up themselves, give me the names of reliable scrap-yards, or send round to me men in overalls called Ron and Alf and Perce, who usually arrive on the same night and contest hotly for the job. They come to some arrangement amongst themselves, and then what Ron does on Monday Alf condemns as useless and undoes on the Tuesday. What Bert declares to be ignition trouble, Perce diagnoses as a case for new clinker-butts. One night last week four of them put new sets of gaskets in and kept coming up to the flat to sell me the old ones.

It is all very unsettling, so much so that I stopped at a book-stall yesterday strongly tempted to buy a book called *The A B C of the Internal Combustion Engine*. Whether it was some sort of omen I don't know, but I found I had picked up the book next door, called *The A B C Railway Guide*.

(To be apprehensive.)

J. B. B.



## Fever Up Above

IT took a little time to get the ironmonger to understand what I was after. I had no voice and the ironmonger had.

"I am in bed eating M. and B. 760 —" I whispered.

"Would you repeat the number?"

"—and my family have gone to the sea-coast for the day, leaving me alone in this remote mansion to top myself up with prophylactics and let speech return. Downstairs on the kitchen table is nourishment. I am increasingly anxious to get at it, but on the other side of my bedroom door is a lock, and about half an hour ago some solid part of this lock died with a loud tick and claimed me its prisoner."

"Where is the key?" asked the ironmonger, in his rusty, three-lever tones.

"It never came back from the Crusades. Now, if a deputation were to call, or a fire—"

"How high is the house?"

"Too high for athletics."

"Is it a good lock?"

"It stood up to the Wars of the Roses."

Eventually, but not before the telephone had grown hot with his imbecile curiosity, he agreed to dispatch his Mr. Jenkins on a racing bicycle fortunately in the possession of the firm. Then I lay back to enjoy a curious bacteriological dream in which seven hundred and sixty warriors in Cellophane uniforms were harrying at the point of the hypodermic a mob of ill-favoured ogres whose identity I knew only too well without it being written on a large banner made up from a number of my doctor's prescriptions.

I was rudely withdrawn from a comfortable plush seat on the battlefield by the steady blows of artillery on the other side of the door. A moment later there was with me a tall, sandy youth with hands that curled outwards, and spectacles.

"Mr. Jenkins, I take it?" My voice was about two octaves below the previous amateur record, and he started sharply.

"Never seen a lock like this one before."

"And you never will again. It is believed to have been fitted by Henry the Fourth's field security police the

night he spent here on his way to investigate those disasters in Wales."

"You don't say," said Mr. Jenkins, screwing back some jagged lumps of iron. "Well, she's O.K. now."

"Quite sure?" I croaked.

"Look," he said, and shut the door. When he turned the handle, nothing happened. And when he banged it and rattled it and joggled it, still nothing happened.

"Strike me pink!" cried Mr. Jenkins, a prayer which, by the look of him, had been answered many years before.

"What do you know about that?" demanded Mr. Jenkins, one of our many piteous victims of transatlantication.

"Nothing at all, which is why I sent for you. How much do you know about it?"

"Me? It's hardly my cup of tea. You see, motor-scythes are my special."

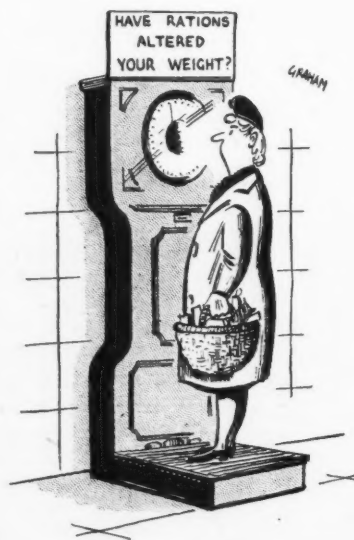
"I see. Well," and I picked up the telephone, "let's hope your employers can now spare someone from the spirit-kettle section."

"No go," boomed Mr. Jenkins. "Early closing. I oughtn't to be here, not really."

That seemed hardly in doubt.

"I was going to see Hedy Lamarr," he said sadly.

"There's the Fire Brigade."



"Costly," Mr. Jenkins demurred. "And then there's my professional reputation."

"I'd forgotten that." I tried instead to get through to Mrs. Crust at the post office, but the telephone, which had also stood up well enough to the Wars of the Roses, had sunk into its habitual coma. Nothing was said for some time, then Mr. Jenkins made himself comfortable on the other bed and recounted in all their grisly detail the remarkable principles lying at the back of the whirlwind behaviour of the modern motor-scythe. This took upwards of an hour. Mr. Jenkins looked tired after it, and I felt awful. . . . Clocks chimed. . . . The silence began to hurt even more than my throat.

"There's a copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress* over there," I whispered.

"Thanks," said Mr. Jenkins, relighting his pipe of black tobacco, "I'm not what you'd call a heavy reader."

When he had finished telling me the entire plot of a film called *Great Expectations*, which seemed to be something quite separate in his mind from a novel by Charles Dickens, another long silence dropped into place, and when, after he had finished describing a small reciprocating gudgeon with which a friend of his aimed, in his view fruitlessly, to revolutionize the modern motor-scythe, it looked as if his repertoire was about empty.

"You say anybody on the other side with a screwdriver could take the thing off?"

"Pie," he assured me.

"My family should easily be back by midnight if they don't have a burst."

The tension which now grew up between me and Mr. Jenkins was so heavy that I feared the whole house might blow to pieces. . . . Clocks chimed and chimed, and owls hooted. As darkness fell he got unsteadily to his feet and went over to the door.

"Funny it should jam like that," he murmured, idly trying the handle. The door opened quite easily.

"Did you ever!" remarked Mr. Jenkins, putting on his hat. "Well, I'll say good night."

I suppose I said it too.

ERIC.

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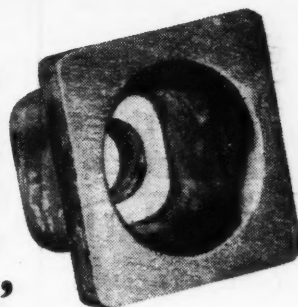
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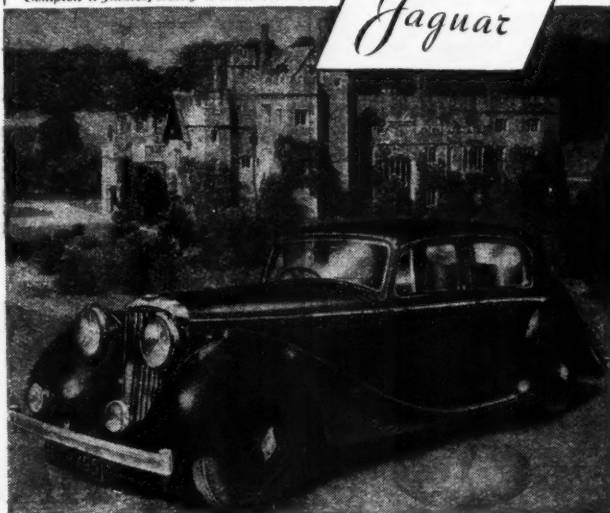
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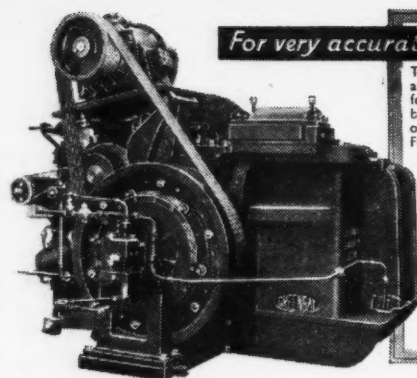
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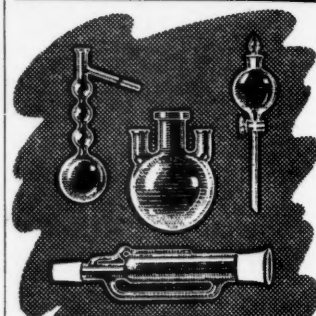
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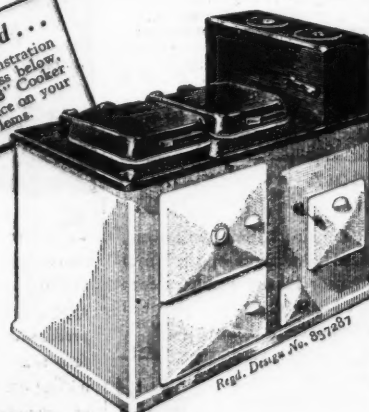


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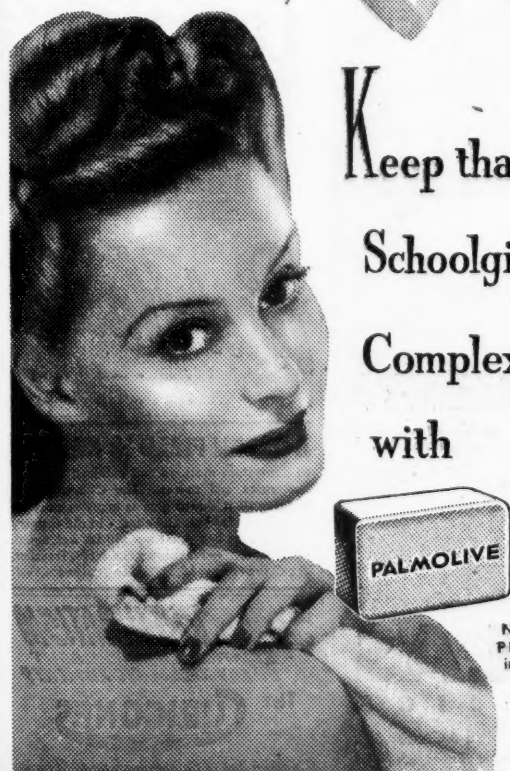
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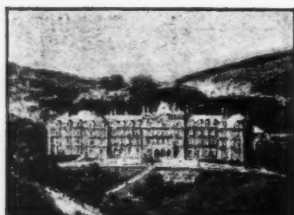
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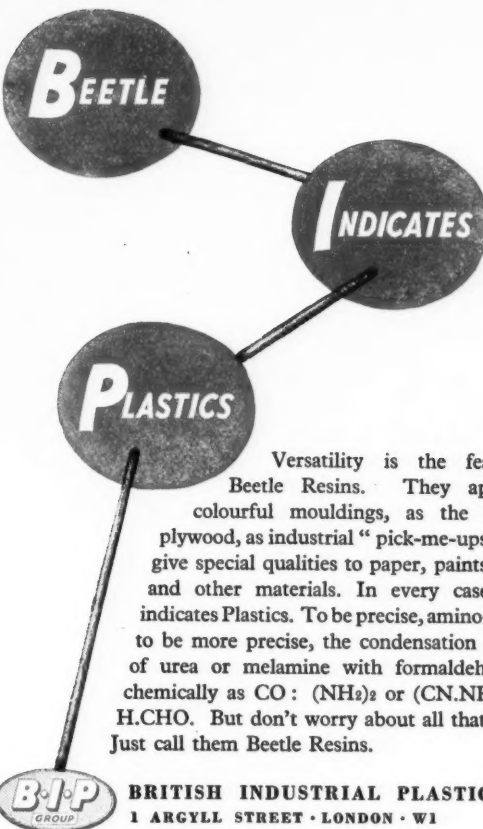
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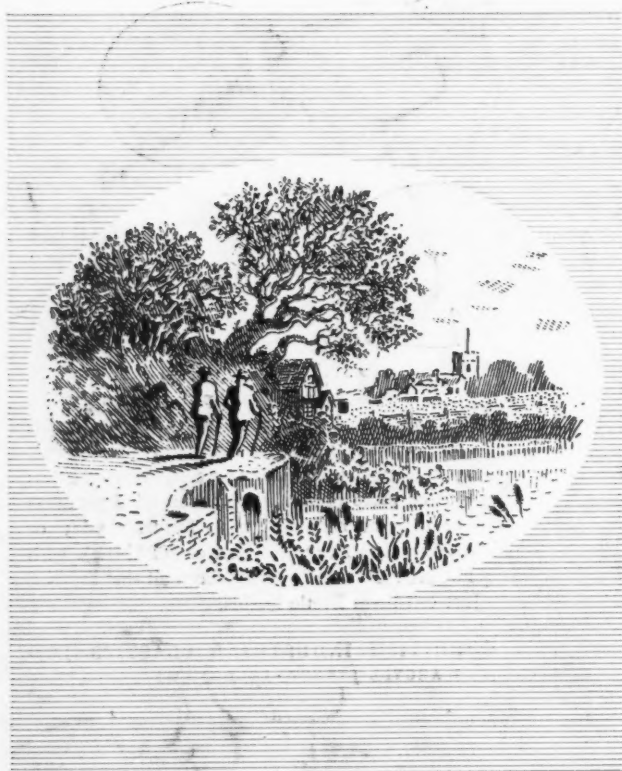
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*Illustration specially drawn by Mervyn Peake*



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March 12, 1946

Dear Sirs,

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S.D.F. M.E.F.

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